



Fairfax First is an effort to improve the speed, consistency, and predictability of the development review process within a culture that is solution-oriented.

Welcome to "Developing News," a new publication highlighting some of the changes taking place inside Fairfax County's planning and development review agencies.

## ONE-STOP-SHOP FOR SIGNS

For some business owners in Fairfax County, one of the final steps of the development process – getting the signs installed – has been a hurdle. The ribbon-cutting is getting close, and the sign permit hasn't been issued – what is taking so long? Responding to customer's needs, staff recently simplified the sign permitting process. Before the changes, customers would have to fill out two applications and often go back and forth between two counters: the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) on the eighth floor of the Herrity Building and Land Development Services (LDS) on the second floor.

Now, for most signs, there is one application and the whole process can be handled by DPZ staff on the eighth floor. This includes wall-mounted signs and free-standing signs less than six feet in height. If the sign is free-standing and is more than six feet, the request does have to be signed off on by Building Plan Review in LDS, but these are few and far between. To learn more about the sign permitting process visit:

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-zoning/zoning/sign-permits](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-zoning/zoning/sign-permits)

## We Want to Hear From You!

If you have story ideas for *Developing News* or suggestions for improvements, please contact:

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The process for permitting most signs - like the ones shown above - is now handled by the Department of Planning and Zoning.



## CUSTOMERS & STAFF WORKING TOGETHER



Fairfax County Planning & Development Agencies

### Customer Bill of Rights

We strive to create a partnership of mutual respect, courtesy and accountability for all. Customers have a right to services that are ...

-  **Accessible, Understandable and Fair**
-  **Responsive and Collaborative**
-  **Predictable, Consistent and Timely**
-  **Solution-Oriented**

**Customer Responsibilities:**

- Use best practices to ensure quality submissions.
- Respond diligently to information requests to facilitate the review process.
- Be considerate of others to create a partnership based in mutual respect.

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If accommodations or alternate formats are needed, please call 703-324-1780.

Customers and Staff Working Together

Homeowners, contractors, engineers, developers, permit runners, business owners. These are just some of the diverse customers that the staff at Fairfax's planning and development services agencies encounter every day. Each arrives with their own objectives and different levels of knowledge about the regulatory process in Fairfax County.

It is our goal to partner with customers to achieve two goals: Ensure that projects proceed according to code and that customers receive customer service that is second to none. We have recently published a Customer Bill of Rights to guide our customer service efforts. In it, we have laid out the expectations for staff when working with the public. The document also communicates the customer's responsibilities, which ensures that the groundwork is laid for a successful partnership.

This Bill of Rights will be displayed at our counters and be posted on the county's website. With clear expectations set for the customer experience, customers and staff can partner to achieve common goals.

### County Staff is Available to Assist You

Planner of the Day: 703-324-5387, TTY 711

Engineer of the Day: 703-324-1575, TTY 711

Permit Application Center: 703-222-0801, TTY 711



## SITE PLAN REVIEW TIMES CONTINUE TO FALL

Before an inch of dirt is moved in a new construction project, county staff must review the site plans to ensure that the project conforms to county codes and standards. This review includes examining the quality of new public infrastructure, control of erosion and sedimentation during construction, adequate measures to control stormwater runoff, tree preservation and preventing the pollution of our public waters.

The Site Development & Inspections Division of Land Development Services coordinates with internal and external agencies to conduct the review of site plans. In recent years, improvements to the process has resulted in shorter review times, which translates into our customers saving time and money on projects.

## Site Plan Review - FY17

**43**

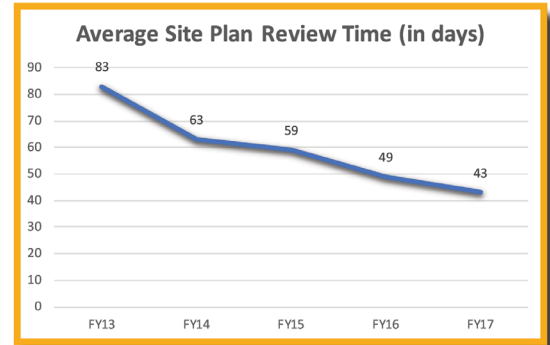
Days, on average, to complete a major site plan review

**202**

Major site plans processed

**969**

Infill plans processed



## TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMATION

The county will soon replace the aging technology systems that currently support our planning and development processes. After working with staff and customers to develop the requirements for such software, we



are now developing this system, known as PLUS (Planning and Land Use System), with the software company Accela. Our aim is to have the core components of this system up and running by 2020. Once implemented, this software will become the backbone of our service delivery. Stay tuned!





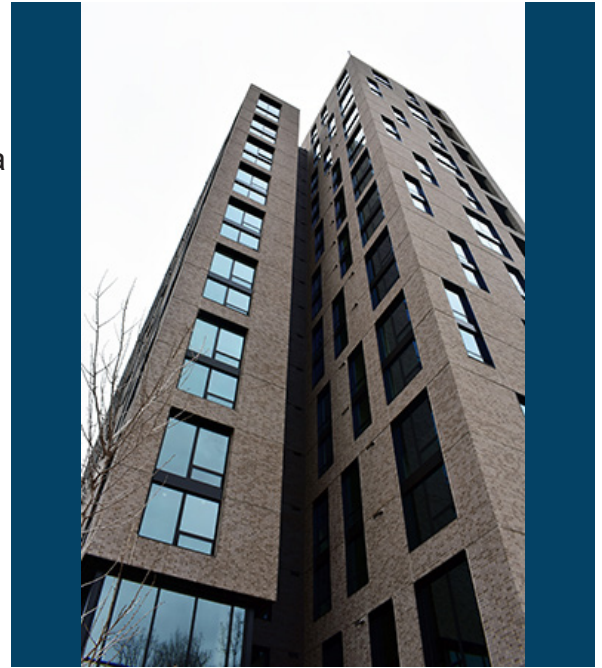
## A STORY OF PARTNERSHIP: PHASED OCCUPANCY

It is the county's job to ensure construction projects proceed safely while helping customers meet their deadlines. Developers are eager to see the end of their construction projects; that's when they can start earning money on their investment. Traditionally, the county grants occupancy only once construction is completely finished. As Fairfax continues to urbanize and develop up – in the form of high rise buildings – the county needed to modify this model to attract the highest-quality projects.

During the last few years, industry and Fairfax County forged a partnership that allows “phased occupancy,” which means a building can be occupied while construction is still in process. This means developers can earn money on their property before the final nail has been hammered. Tom Fleury, with Bowman Consulting, worked closely with the county to develop this program. “We needed to figure out how this would work. How were we going to do that? Just try it.” The pilot was a Tysons project: two residential towers, “Block E Arbor Row” by the Hanover Company.

A team composed of industry representatives and the county's site, building and Fire Marshal officials, met constantly on- and off-site to work out a process to make this a reality. They succeeded with that project, documented the process in a formal policy, and then advertised the program to industry. Safety is always the priority, so steps were taken to mitigate any risks to residents or the public while construction is ongoing. For example, prior to granting a phased occupancy, sprinklers must be installed throughout the entire building, even the unoccupied floors. Also, there must be a two-floor buffer between the occupied floor and the floor undergoing construction.

Since its implementation, many projects have taken advantage of the phased occupancy program, and not just high-rises. The policy provides the building and fire officials the leverage to adapt a phased occupancy approach to many types of commercial structures. This partnership between industry and county staff was an example of problem-solving and collaboration that ultimately benefits the economic growth of our community. To find out more about the program, contact Fairfax County Land Development Services' Building Division at 703-631-5101, TTY 711.



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[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/landdevelopment/letters-industry-subscription](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/landdevelopment/letters-industry-subscription)